

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Congressman Jeff Fortenberry today issued the following statement in reaction to the President's decision to "accommodate" American religious institutions with concerns about implementing the new controversial Health and Human Services mandate:

"The President still doesn't understand that religious institutions will still be unacceptably entangled--financially and provisionally-- with drugs, procedures, and services to which they may have religious and moral objections, in violation of their long-held rights of conscience. Moreover, this announcement still does not get to the very core of American distress: religious freedom and conscience rights are natural rights as enshrined in the Constitution. The government does not confer them and must not force persons to violate them by paying for things to which they have reasoned religious or moral objections.

"Congress should protect the religious liberty and conscience rights of every American who objects to being forced by the strongarm of government to pay for services to which she or he has deeply-held objections. We must do so for the benefit of the millions of Americans who are calling for swift bipartisan action."

Fortenberry introduced H.R. 1179, the *Respect for Rights of Conscience Act*, in March 2011. This measure would repeal the controversial mandate, amending the 2010 health care law to preserve conscience rights for religious institutions, health care providers, and small businesses who pay for health care coverage.

Currently, the bill has a bipartisan 180 cosponsors. In the Senate, Senator Roy Blunt is advancing this same legislation, with nearly 40 cosponsors.

H.R. 1179 enjoys the endorsements of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, National Right to Life Committee, Americans United for Life, and other organizations. Numerous other organizations, including the Christian Medical Association and Family Research Council, have urged support of the bill.

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